

Dear neighbors and community,

As promised, I'm continuing to share deeper breakdowns of the FY2025–2026 enacted state budget. This week, I'm focusing on two core critical issues: **housing** and **health**. Furthermore, as the federal budget bill moves to the Senate, I share how this will impact New Yorkers if enacted.

# State Budget



## Budget Update:

Here is a link to the final [budget bills](#) and possibly more accessible, here is a [link to the NY Assembly final budget book](#) that gives a summary of all the various parts of the budget that make up the \$254.3 billion total for the fiscal year 2025-2026. As I do each year, over the next few weeks, I will give a breakdown of the main sections in the budget and highlight areas I believe will be of greatest interest to our communities.

## HOUSING

In her proposed January executive budget, the Governor continued to emphasize large-scale housing development to address the housing affordability crisis in NY, especially through her [City of Yes initiative](#) in New York City. This program was included

in the final budget but we were able to diversify solutions during the protracted negotiations.

I joined advocates and many of my colleagues to fight specifically for targeted affordability development that prioritizes small-scale, infill housing that is key to addressing sprawl, which drives both greenhouse gas emissions and economic segregation. While necessary, development alone will not sufficiently ease the demand on our current housing stock for our immediate housing needs. We need policies that promote and incentivize housing affordability for renters as well. Once again this was central to the housing conversation during budget season.

Key housing investments in this year's budget include:

- \$2 million to launch the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification Program, The GAP Fund. The fight for this program was a central focus of my efforts during budget season. The program is modeled on my bill [A2101](#). A core issue driving housing affordability is the fact that low income people are also stuck in the most energy inefficient housing stock in the state with no means to invest in efficiency measures. NYSERDA has programs like Empower+ to help fund electrification but for any buildings that need pre-electrification or hazard mitigation work like a new roof or mold remediation they are disqualified from the program. The GAP fund would help overcome this initial hurdle by funding the necessary repairs and hazard mitigations, ensuring that more low income households can access clean energy upgrades. Without initiatives like this, we will not reach our climate goals, given that our building stock is one of the greatest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions across the state. The budget includes minimal language to develop the GAP Fund. However, in the closing days of session, I continue to fight for enactment of the full program as articulated in my bill, which
- \$50 million for the [Housing Access Voucher Program \(HAVP\)](#), a new rental subsidy program designed to provide direct aid to New Yorkers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including domestic violence survivors, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- \$431 million for new affordable housing construction including cooperative rentals and homeownership. This capital funding supports shovel ready projects that create affordable rental housing, including homeownership and limited equity co-ops.
- \$40 million for [Pro-Housing Communities](#), which incentivizes local governments to address exclusionary zoning and permitting barriers that prevent housing creation.

- \$100 million to establish the new Affordable Homebuyer Opportunity Program which provides tax incentives and grants for low- and moderate-income families first time homebuyers.
- \$30 million per year through 2029 for [Low-Income Housing Credits](#) which doubles the annual cap from \$15 million, incentivizing the private market to build low-income housing.
- \$50 million for [Land Banks](#) which provide critical funding for organizations with land bank programs to acquire and rehabilitate abandoned properties, return them to productive use and develop affordable housing.

## HEALTH

The Governor's initial budget proposal continued a focus on capital investments in healthcare infrastructure and included some modest increases in maternal health and abortion care, and mental health support including crisis response system pilots and increased Medicaid reimbursement for essential services. While many of these investments were positive, concerns were raised by reproductive health advocates that the state needed to go further given federal rollbacks and funding cuts. Advocates stressed the importance of access to medication abortion, telehealth access, and Title X funding to solidify protections.

The [final budget makes critical investments in the health](#) of New Yorkers and the state's healthcare infrastructure, including:

- \$500 million for financially distressed hospitals which helps ensure that hospitals, especially those in rural, low-income areas remain open.
- \$30 million increase in Medicaid nursing home reimbursement rates which supports care providers facing rising costs and helps prevent facility closures.
- \$25 million for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and the SOMOS Value Based Payment Innovation Fund which supports community clinics and Medicaid focused primary care. The FQHCs in our District include: the [Cortland Family Practice Health Center](#) and the [Pediatric & Family Practice Health Center](#) in the city of Cortland as well as the [Community Health Center](#) in Groton and the [Ithaca Free Clinic](#) in the city of Ithaca.

### Reproductive Health

\$70 million total for reproductive health initiatives was included in the final budget that support access, education and infrastructure for comprehensive reproductive health services across New York State.

- \$25 million for the [Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program](#) which provides direct support to abortion providers and nonprofits offering financial assistance, transportation and lodging to patients.

- \$25 million to expand access to abortion medication which supports procurement, distribution, and subsidization of abortion pills.
- \$15 million for capital upgrades to clinics and facilities to ensure providers have infrastructure to safely and effectively deliver services.
- \$7 million for maternal health grants which support initiatives to improve prenatal and postpartum care, especially in high-need communities.
- \$5 million for medication abortion providers to directly fund providers to increase availability and expand capacity for medication abortion services.
- \$4 million for provider training and \$1 million for access coordination to support continuing education, trauma-informed care training and centralized coordination of patient support networks.

The budget also includes important health-related policy protections, including:

- a requirement that hospitals provide emergency abortion care for pregnancy complications to guarantee lifesaving treatment,
- updated terminology such as replacing outdated, stigmatizing language like “fetal death” with “pregnancy loss” and reducing reporting requirements to protect privacy, and
- expanded Medicaid coverage for fertility preservation, including storage for patients undergoing treatments that cause infertility.

#### Mental Health and Family Support

- \$8 million for [Daniel’s Law pilot programs](#) which fund non-police crisis intervention teams composed of behavioral health professionals to respond to mental health emergencies.
- \$2 million for [Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists \(SAPIS\)](#) to support placing substance abuse prevention counselors in schools and community centers.
- \$8.5 million for BABY ([Birth Allowance for Beginning Year](#)) to establish the Birth Allowance for Beginning Year (BABY) Benefit. This initiative provides a one-time \$1,800 payment to low-income parents receiving public assistance upon the birth of a child, aiming to support maternal and infant health by alleviating birth-related expenses and reducing financial stress during the early stages of parenthood.
- \$1.5 million for diaper banks which provide diapers to families in need.

# Legislative Update





Several of the bills that I sponsor in the Assembly are actively advancing through committee and are also advancing in the Senate so they have become my focus for the last 8 official session days that will end on June 17th. There are 8,800 active bills in the Assembly so at this point there is a bit of a Hunger Game to get bills over the finish line and it becomes very hard to predict what ultimately will progress to the end. Each member has different strategies to move their bills. I find my strategies change as I learn and grow and as the context and political environment changes. Most bills die by simply never making it onto an agenda. It never ceases to make me smile every time I think of the [School House Rock I'm Just a Bill video](#), it truly is so accurate!

To get bills moving I focus on identifying all the stakeholders and getting feedback and input on the bill language, finding all existing precedent within the state and in other states or countries, and articulating all the science and data to support my bill.

Once a bill is moving and it makes it all the way to the floor the true enemy of a bill is often time. If there is opposition to a bill it will be laid aside for a debate by members across the aisle. These bills build up like scraps of paper blowing in the wind waiting to be caught up (one of the lucky few) and laid on the debate list for a final debate and vote. If a bill is not laid aside however, it will be voted on the minute the bill arrives on the chamber floor. I have been focusing on getting collective support on legislation as a strategy this year. Here are a few bills that have unanimous support:

- [A1556](#) - **Food Safety & Transparency Act**: Bans three toxic food chemicals that have already been banned in several other states and requires food manufacturers to disclose the analyses that they performed to determine that the chemicals used in their food products are safe based on federal criteria. Note that the FDA currently does not require any disclosure so the food industry is predominantly self-regulated and there are thousands of chemicals used in food that we, as a country, are unaware of. This bill would require that disclosure. Given that the data already exists and the analysis has already been performed, this disclosure requirement would not add any notable burden to manufacturers

nor would they be required to change packaging as a result of this law. It would require simple disclosure to the Department of Ag & Markets that would maintain a public database. If however, manufacturers are in fact breaking the law and have not determined a chemical is Generally Recognized as Safe before including it in a formulation they always have the option to reformulate their recipes and product production. As the Federal government continues to slash healthcare funding it is critical that we prioritize prevention and preventing food companies from using our bodies as trash cans for profit is a first step. This bill passed unanimously out of the Agriculture committee and has been reported to the Codes committee.

- [A1029](#) - **Sex Worker Immunity Act**: Provides immunity from prosecution for sex work when a person is a victim or witness of a crime and reports that crime to law enforcement or seeks medical aid. This legislation is designed to encourage participation with investigations. In the case of [the Gilgo Beach murders](#), law enforcement has been forthright in stating that, had sex workers felt safe to engage with law enforcement they most likely would have prevented several murders. After discussion, the bill will be voted on consent in the chamber (no debate) and is expected to pass unanimously.
- [A5254](#) - **Open Water Data Act**: Establishes a centralized public platform for water quality and quantity data across the state. This bill is designed to bring together the state's water-related agencies from various levels of government to collaborate on creating, operating, and maintaining an integrated water information platform of data that is already being collected, ensuring that water resources are managed more efficiently and giving water users, advocates, and scientists access to statewide data to make informed decisions on usage, management, and protection. This bill passed unanimously out of the Environmental Conservation committee and has been reported to the Ways and Means committee.
- [A5352](#) - **Outdoor Nature-Based Childcare Certification**: Creates a state-recognized pathway for outdoor early education programs for the operation of licensed outdoor, nature-based child care classrooms for preschool and school-age children in an outdoor space with a curriculum designed to maximize access to outdoor learning environments which have been shown to enhance cognitive abilities, creativity, problem-solving skills, and overall mental health. Outdoor activities also promote physical fitness and reduce the risk of obesity and related health issues among children. The bill passed out of the Children and

Families committee, passed unanimously out of the Codes committee, and has been reported to the Ways and Means committee.

- [A7964](#) - **New York Native Plants Designation Act**: Establishes a New York native plants designation and seals or logos identifying native plants as grown in New York state and certified for their quality that can be used for product labeling, advertising, and displays. Native plants are essential to New York's ecosystems. They provide food and habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife, while also improving soil health, managing stormwater, and supporting climate resilience. But despite their ecological value, native plants are underrepresented in the nursery trade and underutilized in home, municipal, and commercial landscapes. As climate conditions shift and biodiversity loss continues, it is more important than ever to support plant choices that sustain New York's natural heritage. This legislation will support the cultivation and sale of native plants in New York State by creating a dedicated certification designation under the existing New York Grown and Certified program. This bill passed unanimously out of the Agriculture committee and has been reported to the Ways and Means committee.

We are now in the last two weeks of session when every bill must also pass the Rules committee in addition to all other required committees so there are no guarantees until a final floor vote is official. I will continue to update movement of these and other bills in the next few weeks.

# Federal News



The [President's proposed federal budget](#) has passed the House and is now being reviewed by the Senate. Federal funding decisions have a major impact on the size and scope of programs New York State can offer to its residents, including healthcare, housing, food access, and education. Because this budget is unlikely to be finalized before New York's legislative session ends on June 18, we may be returning to Albany later this year to respond to changes in federal funding.

The enacted New York State Budget included new provisions to prepare for possible federal budget cuts, depending on the final amount of funding lost when the federal budget passes:

- Federal cuts up to \$2 billion can be absorbed using state reserves, averting cuts to NYS programs.
- Should more than \$2 billion in funding be cut, Governor Hochul has the authority to make a plan for cuts to NYS programs where she deems them necessary. Her plan is subject to legislative review and approval, for which we will return to Albany for focused negotiation as to what NYS cuts would meet the requirements of our new funding situation. The Governor has the authority to make this plan for cuts up to \$4 billion dollars.
- If federal cuts exceed \$4 billion, the legislature must fully return to session.

The proposed federal budget includes significant spending cuts and policy changes that would shift financial responsibility to states, impact core public services, and increase economic pressure on low-income individuals and families. I've shared below just a few estimated impacts of the federal budget proposal:



### Healthcare Access:

- 1.25 million New Yorkers could lose their healthcare coverage due to [proposed Medicaid restrictions](#) which include new work requirements for childless adults without disabilities beginning in 2026.
  - These new restrictions may indirectly impact individuals with disabilities, especially those with “invisible” disabilities who may not qualify under stricter standards.
- \$13 - 15 billion lost to [New York’s healthcare system](#) due to reduced federal reimbursements for safety-net hospitals and Medicaid cuts.
- Critical reproductive care from [Planned Parenthood](#) including cancer screenings, STI testing and contraception would be blocked by Medicaid funding cuts

### Public Benefits & Housing:

- \$1.8 billion in new state costs for [Food Stamp \(SNAP\) Cuts](#) due to increased work requirements and eligibility checks impacting low-income individuals and families relying on food assistance, which helped feed 3 million New Yorkers in 2024.
- Reduction in funding for [independent living and assistive services](#) that provide critical support helping people with disabilities remain in their homes and communities.
- Cuts to [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI), which provided needed resources to roughly [560,000 older New Yorkers and New Yorkers with disabilities](#), including around 70,000 children, in 2023.
- A 43%, \$26.7 billion cut to [Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, Public Housing, Project-Based Rental Assistance, Housing for the Elderly, and Housing for Persons with Disabilities](#). The remaining funds will be consolidated into a block grant program to be used by states, with a two year cap on assistance for “able-bodied adults.”
- \$3.3 billion cut to eliminate the [Community Development Block Grant](#) (CDBG) program, which provides annual grants to state, cities and counties to expand economic opportunities, decent housing and a suitable living environment for low- and middle-income residents.
- \$1.25 billion cut to eliminate the [HOME Investment Partnerships Program](#) program, a grant program that provides funding to states and localities for affordable housing to the benefit of low-income residents.
- \$532 million cut to [Homeless Assistance Programs](#), a 12% cut and the consolidation of the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS and Continuum of Care grants programs under the Emergency Solutions Grants program, effectively eliminating several critical funding streams for permanent supportive housing and continuum of care.

- \$196 million in cuts to Self-Sufficiency Programs, eliminating the [Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency Program](#) and [Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency \(ROSS\) Program](#).

#### Education:

- Changes to the [requirements to receive a Pell Grant](#), including changing the definition of full-time enrollment from 12 credit hours to 15 and eliminating eligibility for students enrolled less than half-time, which will disproportionately impact low-income and first-generation students' ability to afford college
- [Nutrition program](#) and early childhood grant reductions which threatens the availability of free & reduced lunch and pre-K access.
- [Elimination of grant programs](#) that provide services to specific K-12 populations, teacher training opportunities, as well as education research and data collection.

#### Seniors:

- Medicaid eligibility changes would [shift more costs to states and increase out-of-pocket expenses](#) for low-income seniors, threatening access to nursing home care, home health aides, and long-term care services.
- Cuts to [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#) could reduce support for more than 560,000 older and disabled New Yorkers, including over 70,000 children with disabilities who rely on these monthly benefits for basic needs.
- Reductions to [Medicare provider reimbursements](#) may result in fewer participating physicians, longer wait times, and limited care options for seniors on fixed incomes.
- Eliminates funding for [Senior Community Service Employment Programs](#), which help older adults reenter the workforce and maintain financial independence.

#### Additional Policy Changes:

- \$25 billion for a national missile defense shield ([Golden Dome for America](#))
- \$21 billion to restock the nation's ammunition arsenal
- \$34 billion to expand the naval fleet with more shipbuilding
- \$5 billion for border security.
- [Repeal of a 90 year old federal tax on gun silencers](#)
- [Allow increased leasing of public lands](#) for drilling, mining and logging to generate revenue



### **Immigration:**

We are hearing case after case of friends and family in our community being terrorized by the scapegoating and the weaponization of the issue of immigrants in our country. Each day we hear from more folks in our community whose lives are being dismantled. Just this week, a naturalized U.S. citizen shared with our office that they were now too afraid to leave their home after an armed ICE presence was reported locally, fearing that if detained, he would not be able to prove his citizenship to sufficiently satisfy this administration. This is not helping our communities. The threat of removing naturalized citizens destabilizes our economies and our culture.

These stories are not isolated. They represent a larger pattern of fear, confusion, and instability—impacting individuals who have followed the legal process and are contributing to our communities. There are two facts we all should know and remember - 1) immigrants (both documented and undocumented) collectively pay almost \$1 trillion in taxes every single year and, 2) the research consistently shows that the crime rate for a community decreases directly proportional to an increase in the number of both documented and undocumented immigrants living in that community!! We must not simply take at face value the lies spread by the Trump administration. It takes a simple Google search. We must do the research. We are not fools, so let's not let ourselves be fooled. <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-taxes-2024/>

# Anna in the News



I was [interviewed by a NY Times reporter](#) last week and the conversation about the state reopening negotiations to expand natural gas pipelines in NY as a solution to energy affordability was surreal experience at best.

It's a self fulfilling prophecy if we say things are going to get worse with respect to energy cost but then we back off the very state roadmap put in place to make energy affordable. We can't simply say no to gas pipelines and then say no and do nothing to build out an alternative pathway and expect that prices won't increase! We have to say no to the status quo of pipelines and simultaneously build up the alternative so that the new renewable infrastructure will be the very solution that reduces prices. This transition was literally the whole point of the [NY Climate Action Council's roadmap](#) approved in December of 2022 - build out the electric grid stability, incentivize thermal energy networks and geothermal, build out offshore wind, invest in agrivoltaics so solar isn't competing with farming, actually fund the deferred maintenance on our hydroelectric, invest in distributed energy systems, and virtual power plants...

A natural gas pipeline is one big blunt and environmentally costly solution to our power needs with a ton of long term health, environmental, and economic cost to taxpayers. It takes courage and vision to lean into a solution that is a diverse set of smaller solutions collectively solving the same problem but with significantly less ultimate costs to New Yorkers.



At the end of the day it is relatively simple math. Let's say you need ten units of energy. You can have one source providing all 10 units or 10 sources each providing one unit. A business man would say well it's more efficient to do the one thing and get a bigger bang for your buck but what if that one thing causes 10 times more long term environmental and health harms, is it worth it in the long run? They would say yes because there are massive profits to be made in gaining the lion's share of an energy market.

If we let more companies in the game to invest in 10 smaller projects to meet our goal this would prevent kicking the climate can down the road for future policy makers and New Yorkers. We have policy and economic tools that we can use to even out the playing field and incentivize shifting to this more distributed energy approach. It would be economically more stable (diversity in ownership equals greater economic stability overall for the state) and it would actually increase our national security.

A collapsed economy because of climate change or a healthcare system that is also breaking our economy by completely collapsing the middle class will happen unless we stop denying reality and sticking our head in the sand.

# Community Resources



Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S., affecting **1 in 5 Americans** in their lifetime.

**When detected early, skin cancer is highly treatable.**

The Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes in partnership with Dermatology Associates of Ithaca is hosting a free skin cancer screening Friday, June 13, from 4-7



PM at the Shops at Ithaca Mall, 40 Catherwood Road, Ithaca NY. You can learn more about this skin cancer check national program [here](#).



**The Annual Soap for Hope Collection Drive is back!**

This annual Tompkins County-wide collection drive of personal care products is now underway. The drive benefits the Samaritan Center of Catholic Charities Tompkins / Tioga, and it runs from Monday, May 5th to Monday, June 16th.

The drive collects much-needed personal care items that the Center distributes to clients throughout the year. Community members can donate the following:

- Deodorant (men's & women's)
- Bar soap
- Laundry detergent
- Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- Feminine hygiene products
- Toilet paper (preferably ones that are individually wrapped)
- Facial tissue
- Shampoo
- Razors (men's & women's) & shaving cream/lotion
- Moisturizing lotion
- Cleaning supplies (dish detergent, trash bags, sponges, wipes, bathroom/kitchen cleaner)

Collection bins can be found around the county at the following sites:

- Ithaca YMCA
- Ithaca Community Childcare Center (IC3)
- Ithaca Youth Bureau

- True Insurance
- Greenstar (main location + DeWitt Mall)
- First Congregational Church
- St. Catherine of Siena Church
- Immaculate Conception Church
- Ithaca Elks Lodge
- Cornell Students & Campus Life Facilities Management (223 Thurston Avenue)
- Boiceville Cottages (community center building)
- Hillendale Golf Course
- Insero Advisors, LLC

Donations are also accepted directly at Catholic Charities at 324 W. Buffalo Street, Ithaca, Tuesday through Friday 9am- 12 Noon and 1-4 p.m.



### **Help Shape Higher Education in Tompkins County**

The Tompkins County Legislature announced that it is seeking a county resident to fill a vacancy on the Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) Board of Trustees. The vacancy will start on July 1, 2025. This is a volunteer opportunity with a 7-year term, requiring attendance at monthly board and committee meetings. Once applications close on June 16, the Tompkins County Legislature will appoint a member.

Board members govern the college's operations, including appointing the college's president, approving curricula, budgets, tuition and fees, as well as establishing policies. TC3 has been equipping its students with highly sought after skills and practical experience for over 50 years.

Applicants must complete an Advisory Board Application form to indicate interest in serving on the TC3 Board. The form may be obtained from the Clerk of the

Legislature office at the Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building (Old Court House), 121 E. Court Street, Ithaca. The entrance is on the Dewitt Park side of the building. You can also download an [electronic application form](#).

Applications may be dropped off at the Clerk of the Legislature office, mailed to the Clerk of the Legislature, emailed to [legislature@tompkins-co.org](mailto:legislature@tompkins-co.org), or faxed to 607-274-5430 by the end of day on Monday, June 16. The Interview Committee will hold interviews later in June. Minorities, women, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are strongly encouraged to apply.



The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County (MHA) has officially reopened at **511 W. Seneca Street** in downtown Ithaca! The Mental Health Association in Tompkins County offers peer-driven, non-clinical support services that promote recovery, resilience, and community connection for individuals facing mental health and substance use challenges. Their programs include peer and family support, justice system navigation, recovery assistance, and educational workshops like Mental Health First Aid. They also provide a welcoming drop-in space to reduce isolation and stigma, helping individuals build skills, access resources, and stay engaged in their wellness journey.

**There new Business Hours:**

- Monday: 9 AM – 3 PM
- Tuesday: 9 AM – 3 PM
- Wednesday: 9 AM – 3 PM
- Thursday: 9 AM – 7 PM
- Friday: 9 AM – 3 PM

For details on their drop-in hours, support groups, and upcoming activities, visit [www.mhaedu.org](http://www.mhaedu.org) and if you know someone who needs support and assistance you can contact MHA at (607)277-PEER.

In good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anna R. Kelles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'K'.

Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D